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ease, without suffering much pain. From the point of view of the savage it is of special importance that this should be so. As the *Choroti* explained the matter to me: if at the birth the woman is ill, this is due to her being possessed by an evil spirit and the demon, owing to the close connection between mother and child, will also take possession of the latter causing it to fall ill and die. Hence the weakness and sickness from which possibly she is suffering must be concealed and reasoned away. The Choroti have a stereotyped phrase to express this: *lasĭhe ĭse lóuet = lahse ihe, eis lóuet*, that is: »when the child is born, the mother is well». As a matter of fact, a few hours after the delivery the Choroti woman is seen to move about doing some small tasks in the house, fetching water, preparing food, and so on. In short, she acts as if she were quite hearty, thus deceiving herself, her relatives, and the evil spirits. But the curious thing is that among the Choroti the *father* of the child, seemingly instead of the mother, lies in bed, looks weak, fasts, and is attended by the women, in short, behaves just as if he were the person who had given birth to the child and were suffering pains. The precaution which the woman shares with her husband, in addition to abstaining from hard work, is that she has to diet. Like him she avoids meat, limiting her diet to boiled and mashed maize, the leaves of certain trees and certain other vegetables.

This is the custom generally known under the name of *la couvade* (»hatching») and which among the Choroti exists in its most typical form. The father remains lying in bed for five or six days, or *until the navel-wound of the child is perfectly healed*. The reason for this is quite obvious and was, besides, expressly pointed out to me by the Indians. The navel-wound may become a dangerous source of infection, and the new-born child is in its most delicate condition during the first days or until the navel-wound is healed.

Before I give further explanations of the ideas underlying the couvade practices I shall say a few words about the birth customs of the Mataco and the Tobas. These tribes do not practice couvade in the proper sense of the word, but they have the same ideas about an intimate connection existing between the new-born child and both parents.

What I have stated as to the birth customs of the Choroti also holds true of those of the *Mataco*, with the exception that the Mataco father does not actually lie in bed. He has nevertheless to take certain precautions, and the fact that he pretends to be in a delicate condition during the first critical days of his child's life is shown by the expression the Mataco use of him. He is said to have an *aíttah limpáh*, that is to say.